Best of Last Week—Oldest-known sea reptile, new version of chatbot, how exercise benefits the body

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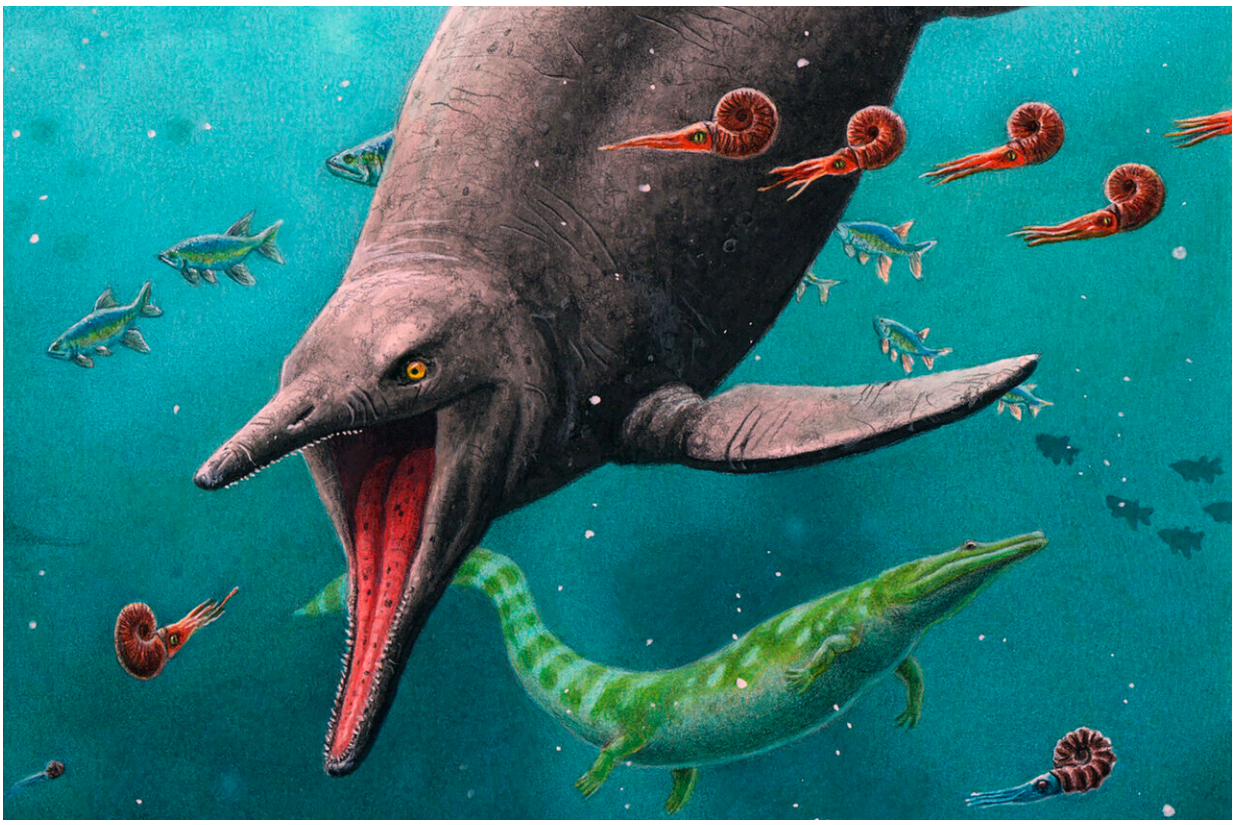

Reconstruction of the earliest ichthyosaur and the 250-million-year-old ecosystem found on Spitsbergen. Credit: Esther van Hulsen

It was a good week for biology research as a team of Swedish and

Norwegian paleontologists discovered the remains of the oldest-known sea reptile from the age of the dinosaurs, an ichthyosaur, on an Arctic island. Also, the French Office for Biodiversity reported evidence that the famous and elusive "cat-fox" found on Corsica is a unique species of cat. And a team at Yale University discovered that one of the most abundant beneficial species living in the human gut displayed an increase in colonization potential when experiencing carbon limitation—a finding that could help medical researchers identify interventions to support a healthy gut.

In technology news, OpenAI issued a report claiming that the newest version of its chatbot, GPT-4, is more accurate and has greatly improved problem-solving capabilities. They also claimed it exhibits human-level performance on academic and professional exams. And the AFP newswire published an opinion piece explaining how AI could upend the world even more than electricity or the internet did, suggesting that it will bring change that is an order of magnitude greater than anything the world has seen before. Also, a team of computer scientists from San Diego and New York explained what happens when your phone is spying on you. You probably will not know it is happening, but you could suffer loss of privacy. And a team at Chalmers University of Technology designed a propeller that allows for quiet, efficient electric aviation.

In other news, a team of researchers affiliated with several institutions in China found that loss of the hypothalamic hormone menin helps drive the aging process, and that some dietary supplements can reverse it, at least in mice. Also, a group of engineering students at Brown University showed that space research does not have to cost billions of dollars. They built a satellite that runs on 48 AA batteries and uses a $20 microprocessor—the total cost for the project was approximately $10,000. And finally, a team of medical scientists at Northwest University uncovered a mechanism through which exercise activates metabolic benefits in the body. They found a protein that is secreted by

muscle contraction in mice, increasing plasma and serum.

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